amar chitra katha

No. 78 Rs.

SHRIDATTA

The *Kathasaritsagara* (The ocean of stories) of Somadeva is really an abridged version of that great treasure—the *Brihatkatha*. No version of the *Brihatkatha* has come to us, though we have many poems and plays in Sanskrit which draw on it for themes. The *Kathasaritsagara*, however, preserves, though in a very terse form, this great heritage. It abounds in tales of romance and adventure in wondrous worlds up in the sky, or in the bowels of the earth, or on the bed of the ocean, peopled by persons and semi-divine beings who deal in magic as an everyday commodity.

The story of Shridatta (a gift of Shri, that is Lakshmi) is adapted from one such tale. Shridatta is a universal favourite as one would expect a gift from the Goddess Lakshmi to be.

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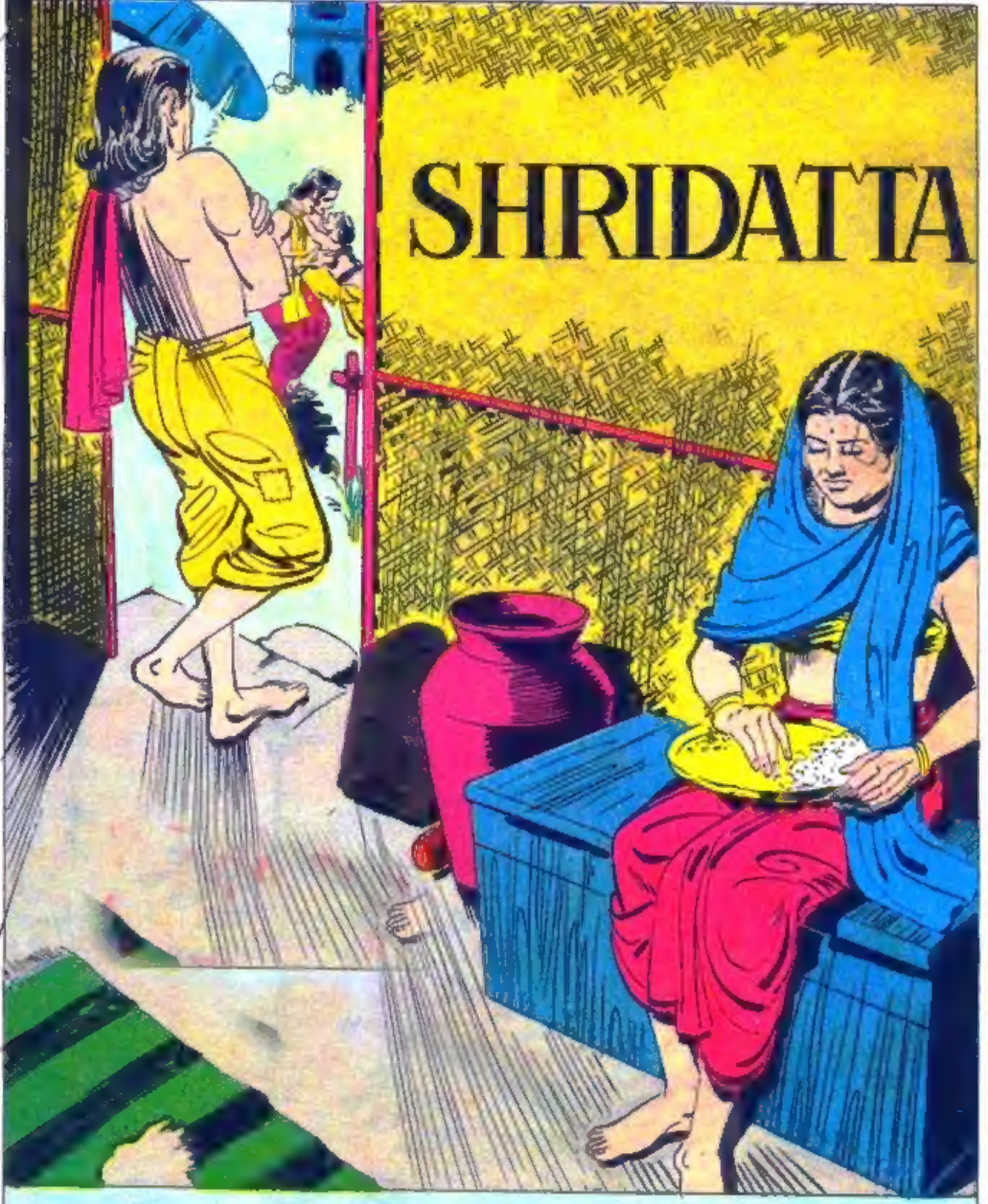
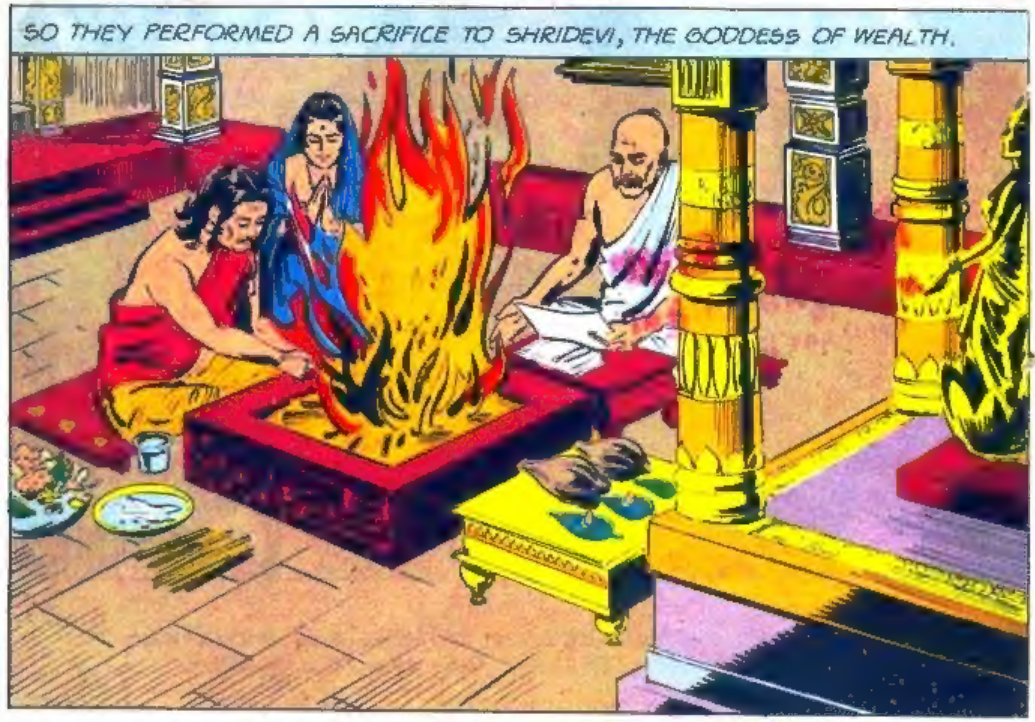


KALANEMI AND HIS WIFE LIVED IN THE CITY OF PATALIPUTRA.
THEY WERE VERY POOR. THEY HAD NO CHILDREN.

EVERYBODY SEEMS TO HAVE LOTS OF MONEY TO SPEND.
AND CHILDREN TO LOVE.

LET'S PRAY TO SHRIDEVI TO GIVE US CHILDREN AND MONEY.
A GOOD IDEA!


SO THEY PERFORMED A SACRIFICE TO SHRIDEVI, THE GODDESS OF WEALTH.

THE GODDESS APPEARED BEFORE THEM.

I AM PLEASED WITH YOU. YOUR DESIRES SHALL BE FULFILLED.

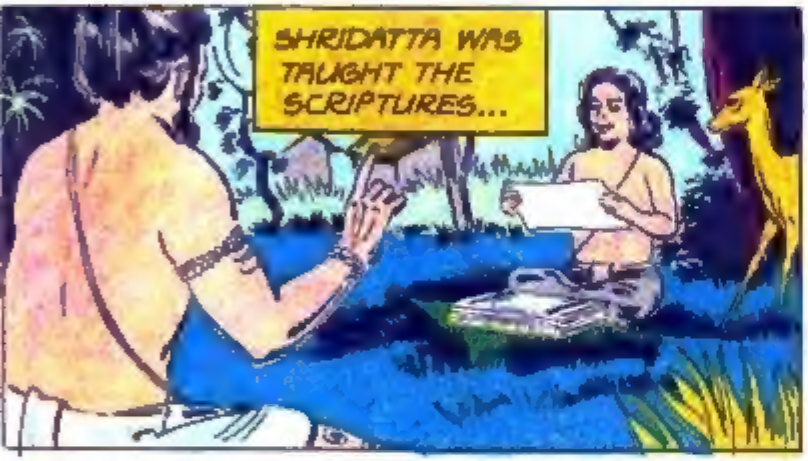
SOON, A SON WAS BORN TO THEM.

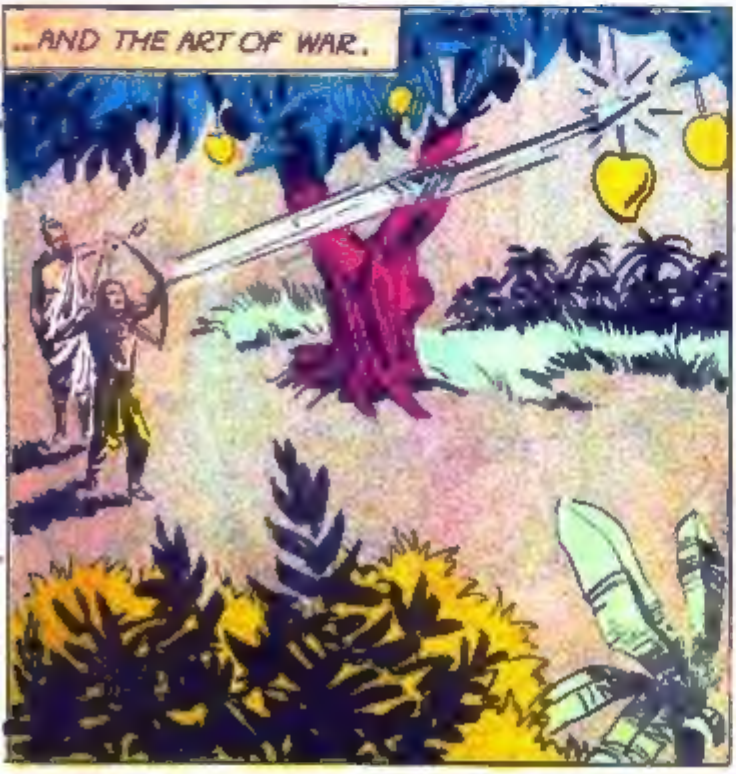
ISN'T HE A FINE BABY?

LET US CALL HIM SHRIDATTA AS HE IS A GIFT OF SHRIDEVI.

SOON AFTER THAT—
I HAVE MADE A BIG PROFIT THIS MONTH.
IT IS ALL THE GIFT OF SHRIDEVI.

I SHALL NOW BE ABLE TO ENGAGE THE BEST TEACHERS FOR YOU.


SHRIDATTA WAS TAUGHT THE SCRIPTURES...


...AND THE ART OF WAR.

...THE FINE ARTS...

HE GREW UP AS GOOD AS HE WAS TALENTED.

KALANEMI IS FORTUNATE.

SHRIDATTA HAS BROUGHT HIM LUCK.

HE IS A GOOD AND AFFECTIONATE BOY.

THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA HEARD OF SHRIDATTA. KALANEMI AND SHRIDATTA WERE INVITED TO THE COURT.

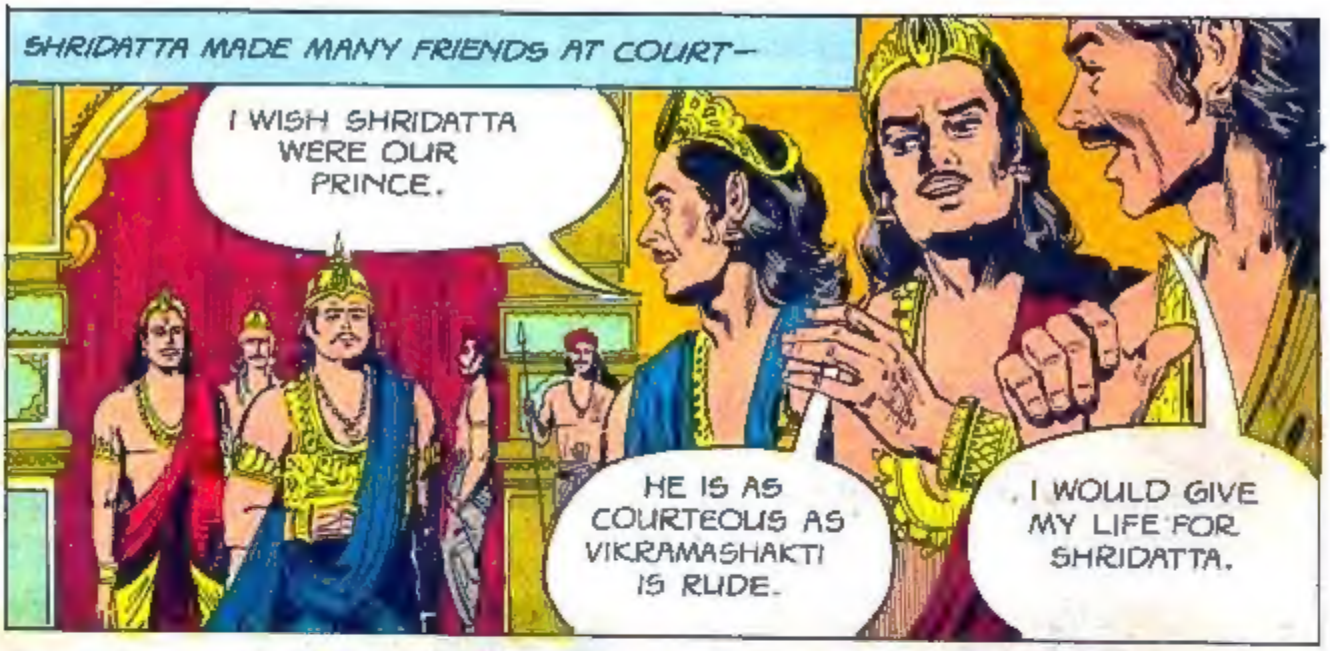
I WANT YOUR SON TO LIVE IN THE PALACE AS PRINCE VIKRAMASHAKTI'S COMPANION.

WE ARE HONOURED, YOUR MAJESTY.

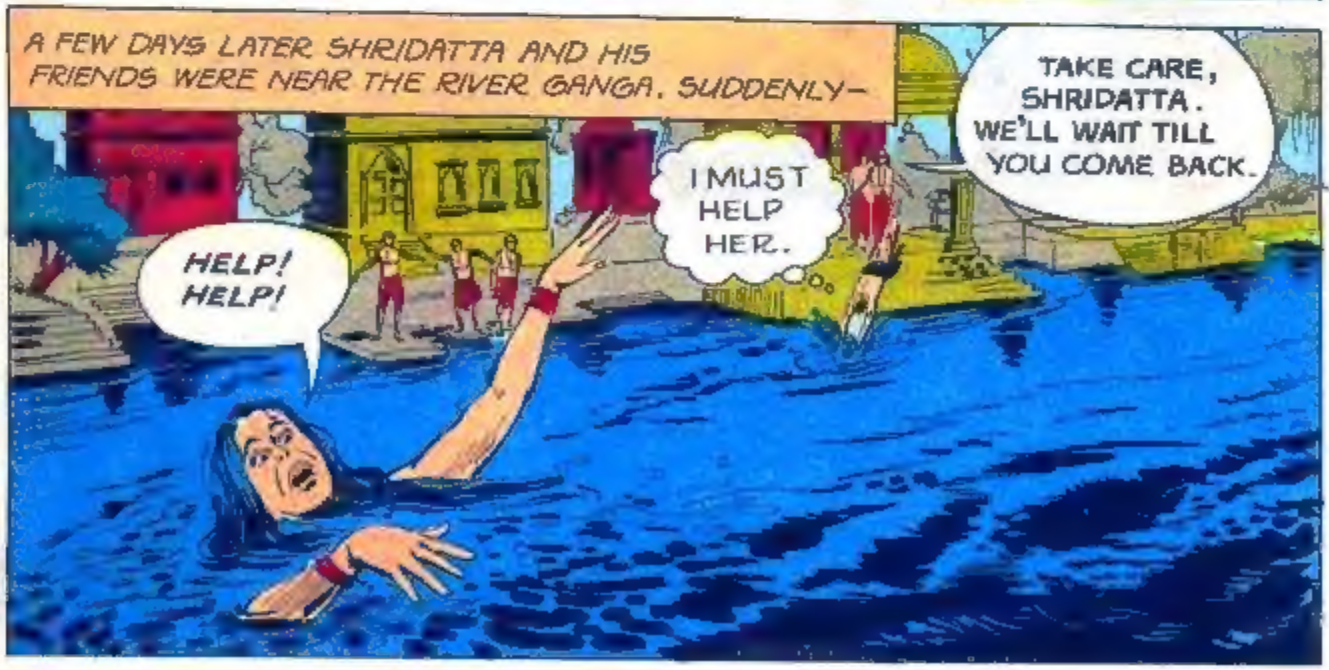
THE KING SOON BECAME VERY FOND OF SHRIDATTA.

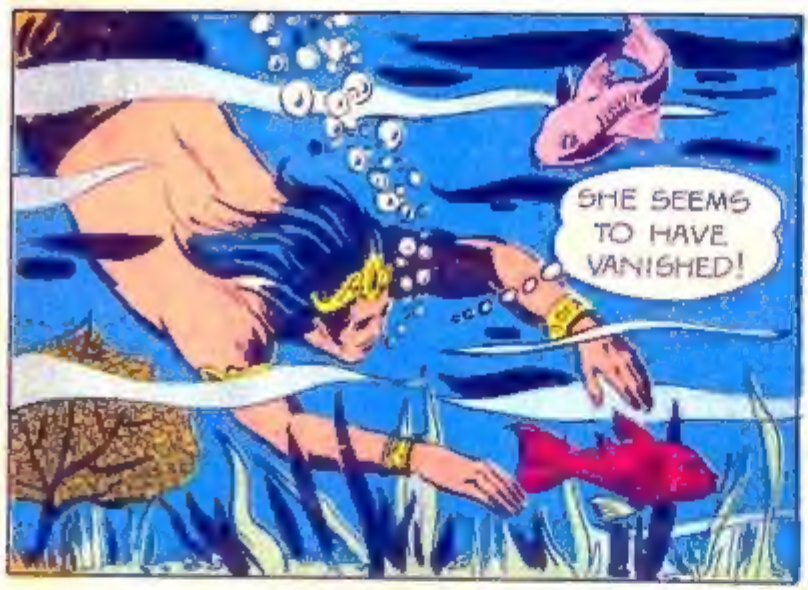
LEARN FROM SHRIDATTA, SON. BE STUDIOUS AND HUMBLE LIKE HIM.

EVERYONE PRAISES SHRIDATTA. FATHER LIKES HIM MORE THAN ME.


SHRIDATTA MADE MANY FRIENDS AT COURT—
I WISH SHRIDATTA WERE OUR PRINCE.
HE IS AS COURTEOUS AS VIKRAMASHAKTI IS RUDE.
I WOULD GIVE MY LIFE FOR SHRIDATTA.

ALL THIS MADE VIKRAMASHAKTI JEALOUS OF SHRIDATTA.
ONE OF THESE DAYS I'LL GET EVEN WITH HIM.

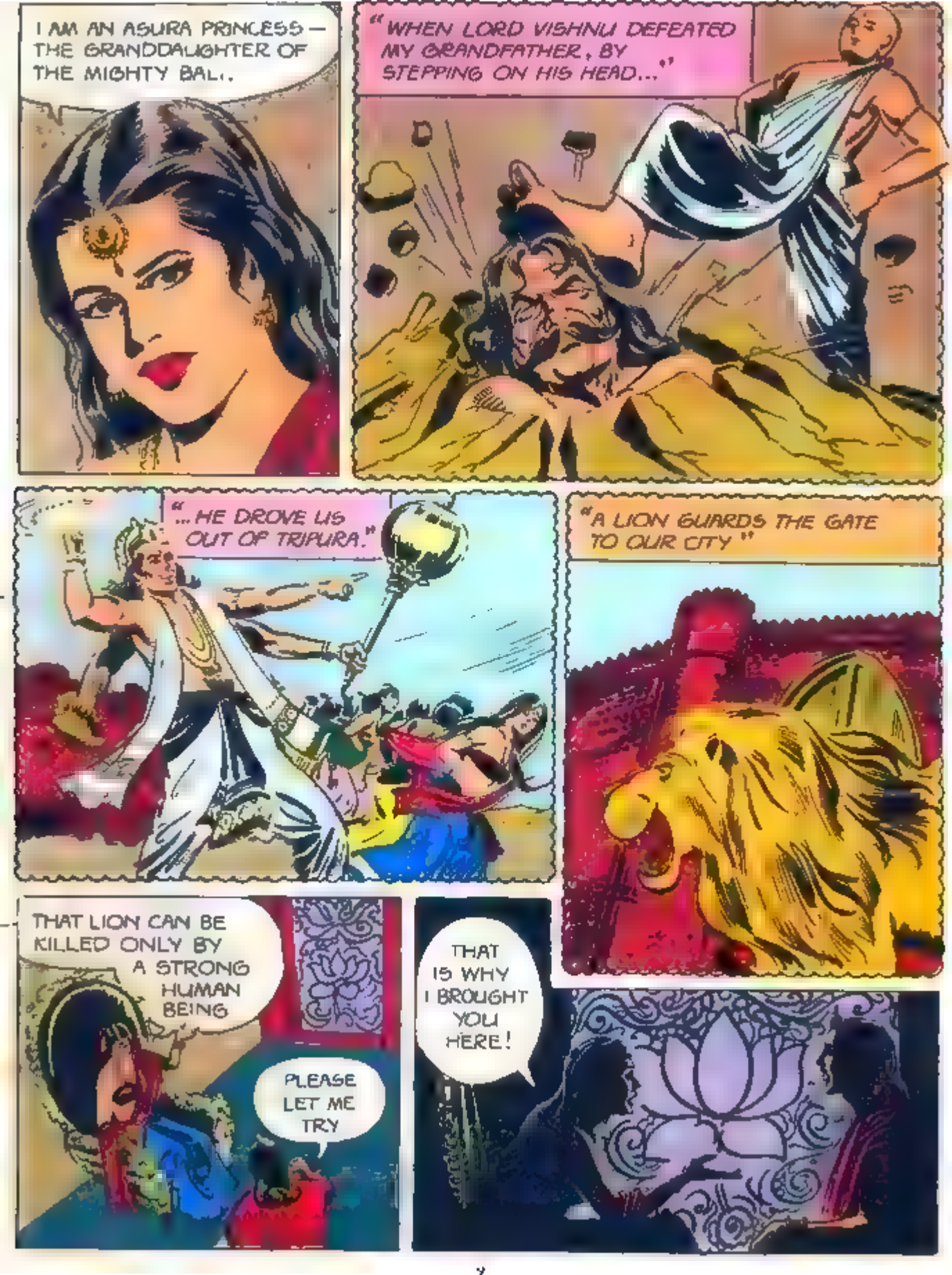

A FEW DAYS LATER SHRIDATTA AND HIS FRIENDS WERE NEAR THE RIVER GANGA. SUDDENLY—
TAKE CARE, SHRIDATTA. WE'LL WAIT TILL YOU COME BACK.
I MUST HELP HER.
HELP! HELP!


SHE SEEMS TO HAVE VANISHED!

AH! A TEMPLE.

I'LL REST HERE TILL MORNING.

THE NEXT MORNING—
THERE SHE IS!
I'LL FOLLOW HER.
INSIDE, A STRANGE SIGHT MET HIS EYES.
WHY ARE THEY WEEPING?
SIT DOWN AND I WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.


I AM AN ASURA PRINCESS — THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF THE MIGHTY BALI.
"WHEN LORD VISHNU DEFEATED MY GRANDFATHER, BY STEPPING ON HIS HEAD..."
"...HE DROVE US OUT OF TRIPURA."
"A LION GUARDS THE GATE TO OUR CITY"
THAT LION CAN BE KILLED ONLY BY A STRONG HUMAN BEING
PLEASE LET ME TRY
THAT IS WHY I BROUGHT YOU HERE!

THE VERY NEXT DAY SHRIDATTA FOUGHT THE LION.

GRRRR

THAT SHOULD KILL HIM.

TO HIS SURPRISE THE LION TURNED INTO A* YAKSHA.

I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, SHRIDATTA. YOU HAVE RELEASED ME FROM A CURSE.

THIS SWORD IS CALLED MRIGANKAKA. TAKE IT.

WITH IT, YOU WILL ALWAYS WIN.

*YAKSHAS ARE SEMI-DIVINE BEINGS, OF WHOM KUBERA WAS THE LORD.

THEN IT WAS THE TURN OF THE ASURA PRINCESS TO EXPRESS HER GRATITUDE.

TAKE THIS MAGIC RING!

IT HAS THE POWER TO WIPE OUT THE EFFECTS OF POISON.

THANK YOU NOW I REALLY MUST GET BACK.

ENTER THIS WELL. YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF IN THE GANGA, AT THE PLACE WHERE YOU JUMPED IN.

FAREWELL!

MEANWHILE —

SHRIDATTA HAS BEEN AWAY FOR SO LONG! WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM?

HE MAY BE IN DANGER...OR EVEN DEAD.

JUST THEN A VOICE WAS HEARD.

SHRIDATTA IS ALIVE! HE WILL SOON BE WITH YOU.

ANXIOUS TO GIVE SHRIDATTA'S PARENTS THE GOOD NEWS, THEY RUSHED TOWARDS THE CITY. BUT ON THEIR WAY THEY WERE STOPPED BY FRIENDS.

GO TO UJJAIN. I'LL HIDE NEAR THE RIVER AND BRING SHRIDATTA TO YOU.

DON'T GO TO PATALIPUTRA. THE KING DIED YESTERDAY. VIKRAMASHAKTI HAS KILLED SHRIDATTA'S PARENTS AND IS NOW LOOKING FOR YOU.

WHEN SHRIDATTA CAME OUT OF THE GANGA –

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

SHH! COME QUIETLY INTO THE WOODS AND I'LL TELL YOU. IT'S A LONG STORY.

SHRIDATTA WAS HORRIFIED WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS.

I'LL AVENGE MY PARENTS WITH MRIGANKAKA, MY DIVINE SWORD.

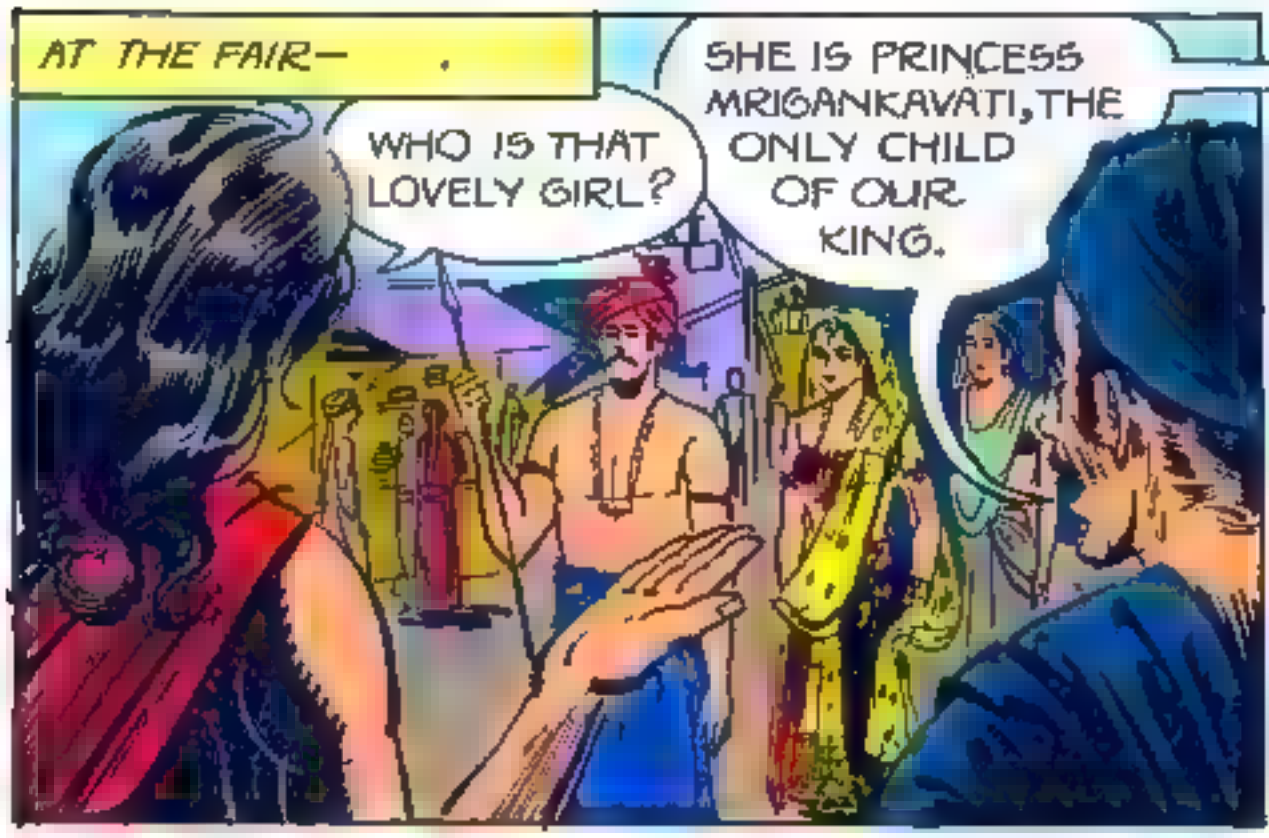
LET'S FIRST GO TO UJJAIN WHERE THE OTHERS ARE WAITING.

AT UJJAIN –

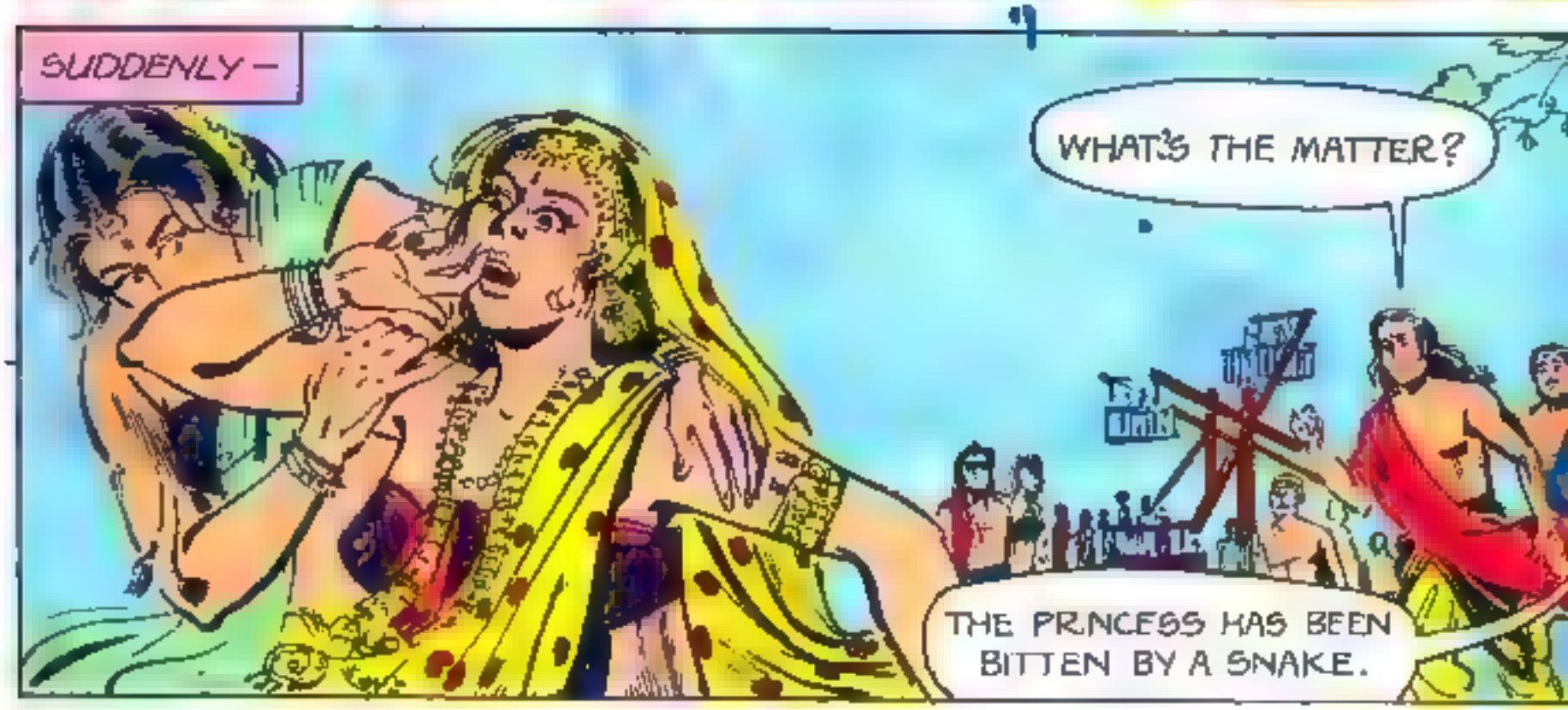
YOU ARE ALWAYS MOODY, SHRIDATTA.

I HAVE REASON ENOUGH. MY PARENTS HAVE BEEN KILLED AND I HAVE NOT YET AVENGED THEIR MURDER.

LET'S GO TO THE FAIR. IT WILL CHEER YOU UP.


AT THE FAIR—
WHO IS THAT LOVELY GIRL?
SHE IS PRINCESS MRIGANKAVATI, THE ONLY CHILD OF OUR KING.

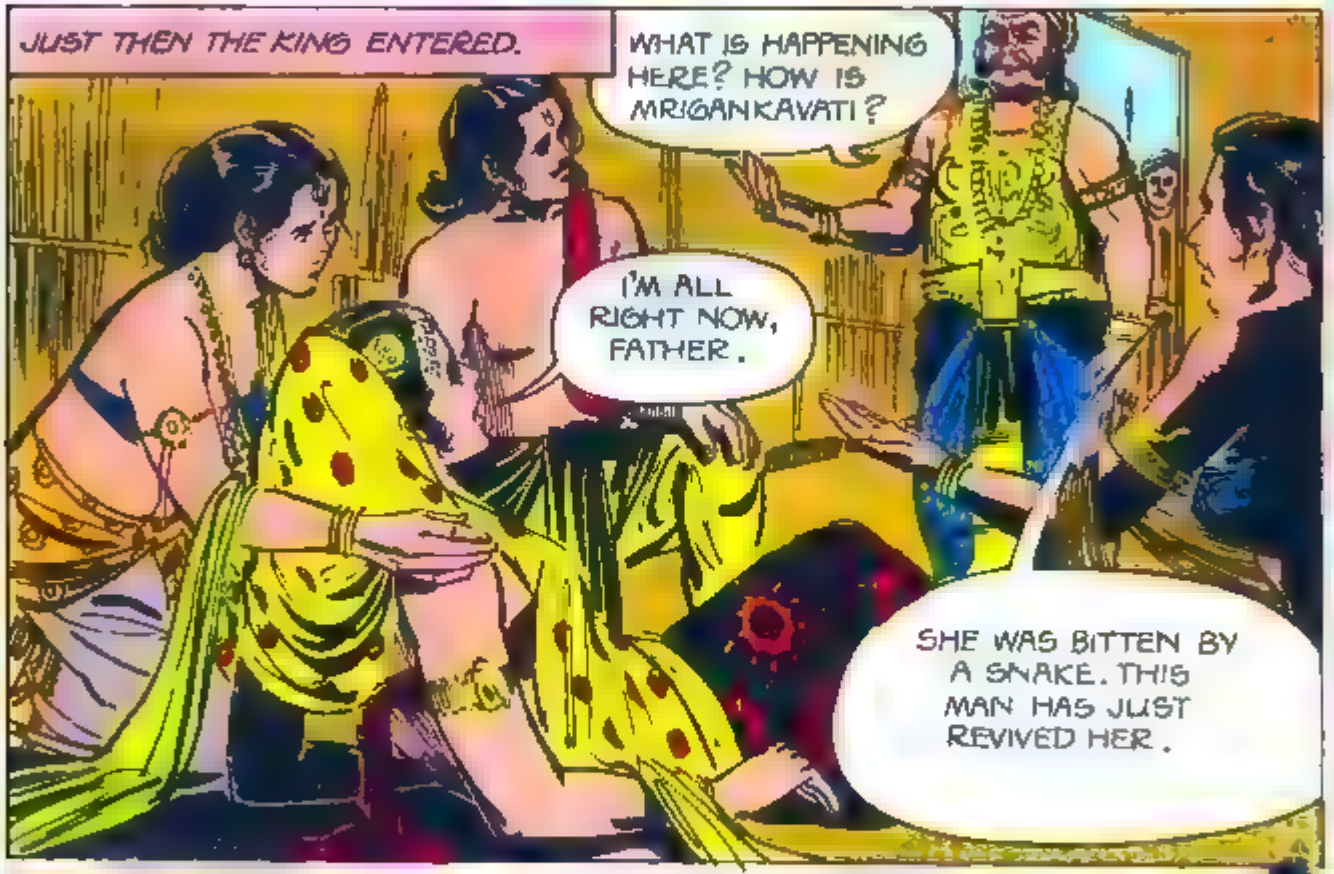
HE WANTS HER TO MARRY A RICH AND POWERFUL PRINCE. ONE FIT TO BECOME HIS HEIR.

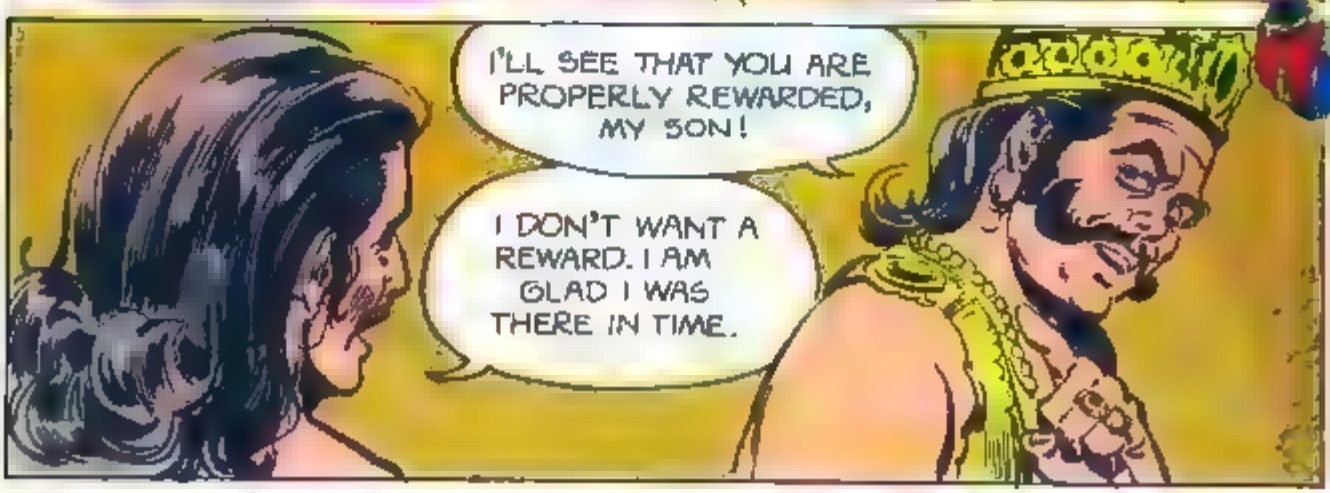

SUDDENLY—
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
THE PRINCESS HAS BEEN BITTEN BY A SNAKE.

THE PRINCESS WAS CARRIED AWAY TO A HUT NEAR BY.
I CAN SAVE HER LIFE
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR THEN?

THEY HURRIED TO THE HUT WHERE THE PRINCESS WAS LAID OUT.
ALAS! MY MISTRESS IS COLD AND STILL.
LET ME IN! I CAN REVIVE HER.
MAKE WAY FOR HIM.
LET ME PUT THIS MAGIC RING ON HER FINGER.
WHO IS HE?
THERE IS NO HOPE. BUT LET HIM TRY.
AS SHRIDATTA PUT THE RING ON HER FINGER THE PRINCESS SLOWLY REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS
WHAT IS THE MATTER? WHO IS THIS STRANGER?
HE SAVED YOUR LIFE. YOU WERE BITTEN BY A SNAKE.

SHRIDATTA AND THE PRINCESS GAZED LONG AT EACH OTHER.
MY SAVIOUR! I OWE MY LIFE TO YOU.
HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS! I WISH SHE WERE MINE.


JUST THEN THE KING ENTERED.
WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE? HOW IS MRIGANKAVATI?
I'M ALL RIGHT NOW, FATHER.
SHE WAS BITTEN BY A SNAKE. THIS MAN HAS JUST REVIVED HER.


I'LL SEE THAT YOU ARE PROPERLY REWARDED, MY SON!
I DON'T WANT A REWARD. I AM GLAD I WAS THERE IN TIME.

AS SHRIDATTA AND HIS FRIENDS WALKED AWAY—

MIND YOUR STEP. WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF?

I JUST REMEMBERED...

...I HAVE FORGOTTEN MY RING THERE.

SHALL I FETCH IT?

DON'T. IT WILL GIVE SHRIDATTA AN EXCUSE TO MEET HER AGAIN.

LATER MRIGANKAVATI'S MAID CAME TO THEIR HUT.

SIR, YOU LEFT YOUR PRECIOUS RING BEHIND. MY MISTRESS WOULD LIKE TO RETURN IT PERSONALLY.

I WILL WAIT FOR HER THIS EVENING IN THE OLD TEMPLE OUTSIDE THE CITY.

THAT EVENING WHEN THEY MET—
I LOVE YOU, MRIGANKAVATI. WILL YOU MARRY ME?
MY FATHER WILL NEVER AGREE. HE WANTS ME TO MARRY A RICH AND POWERFUL PRINCE.
THEN COME AWAY WITH ME.
I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU.
I WILL.
THAT NIGHT—
SHRIDATTA, YOU MUST BE SEEN IN THE CITY TOMORROW SO THAT PEOPLE WON'T CONNECT YOU WITH MRIGANKAVATI'S DISAPPEARANCE.
YOU ARE RIGHT I'LL JOIN YOU LATER. TAKE CARE OF HER
DON'T WORRY.

MRIGANKAVATI'S DISAPPEARANCE CREATED A STIR THE NEXT MORNING.

SHE CAN'T GO FAR. THE KING HAS ORDERED HIS SOLDIERS TO FIND HER.

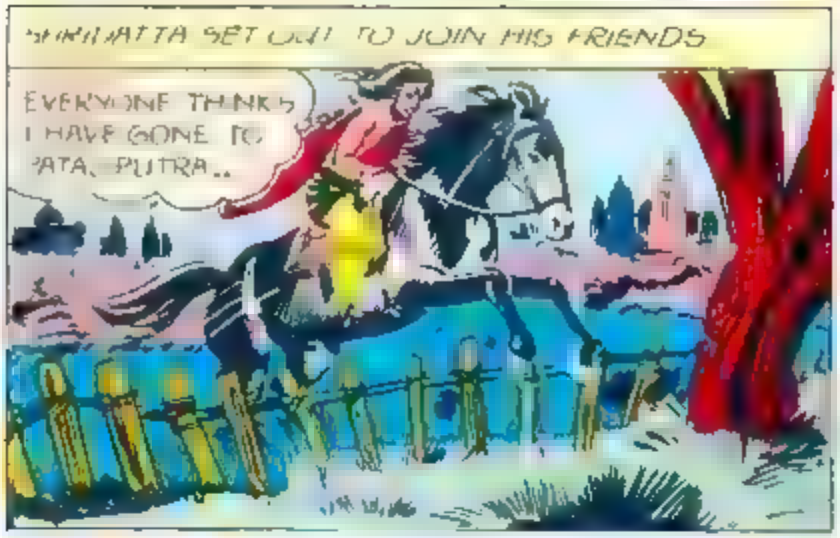
DO YOU THINK SHE WILL BE ABLE TO ELUDE THEM? WHERE CAN SHE HIDE?

YOU ARE THE MAN WHO SAVED HER LIFE, AREN'T YOU?

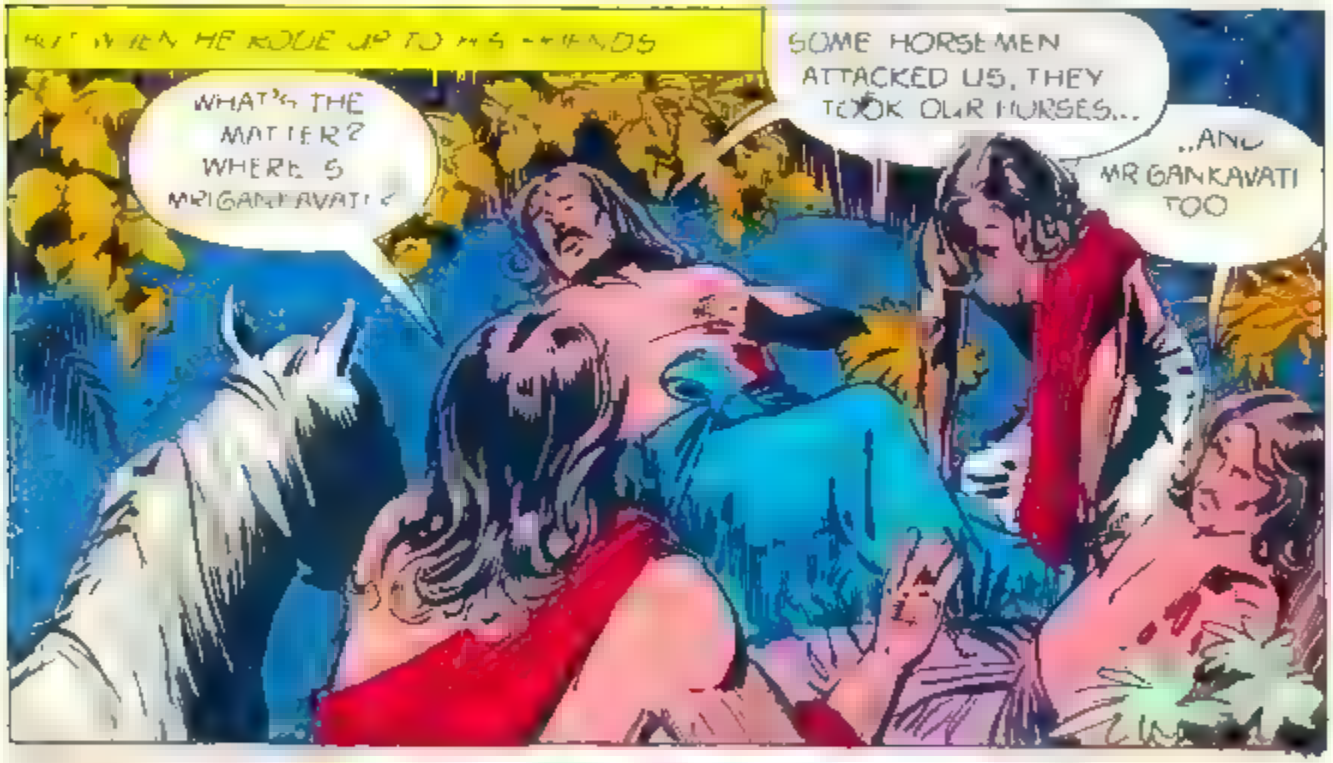
YES! I CAME ON A VISIT TO SEE THE PLACE AND WAS HERE IN TIME TO BE OF SERVICE

I SHALL RETURN TO PATALIPUTRA, TOMORROW.

COME BACK SOME TIME. WE'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED.


SHRIMATTA SET OUT TO JOIN HIS FRIENDS
EVERYONE THINKS I HAVE GONE TO PATALIPUTRA..

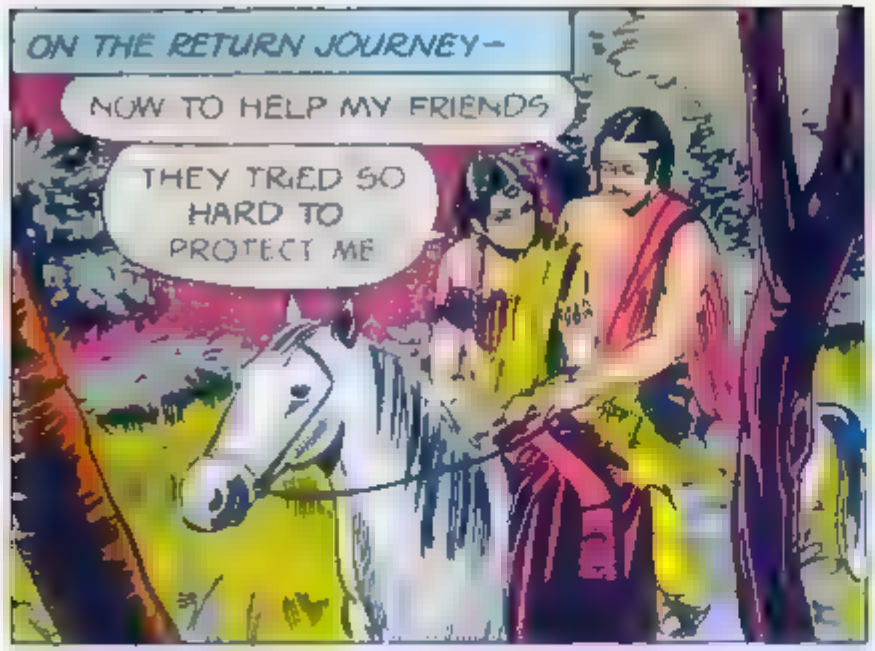
..BUT I'LL SOON BE WITH MRIGANKAVATI

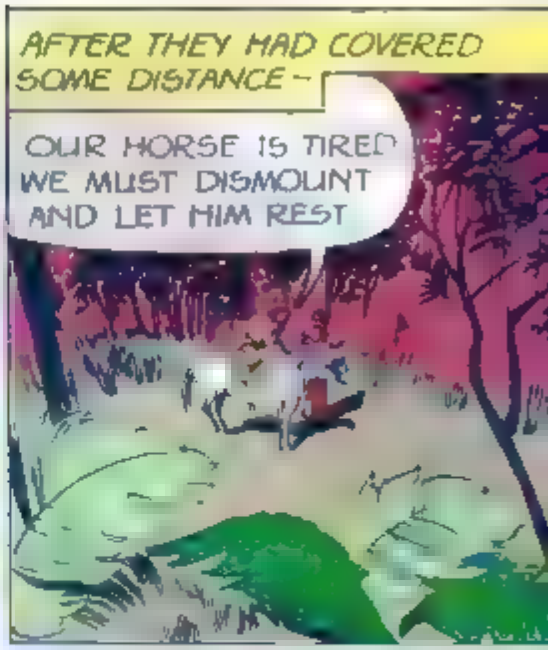

BUT WHEN HE RODE UP TO HIS FRIENDS
WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHERE'S MRIGANKAVATI?
SOME HORSEMEN ATTACKED US, THEY TOOK OUR HORSES...
..AND MRIGANKAVATI TOO

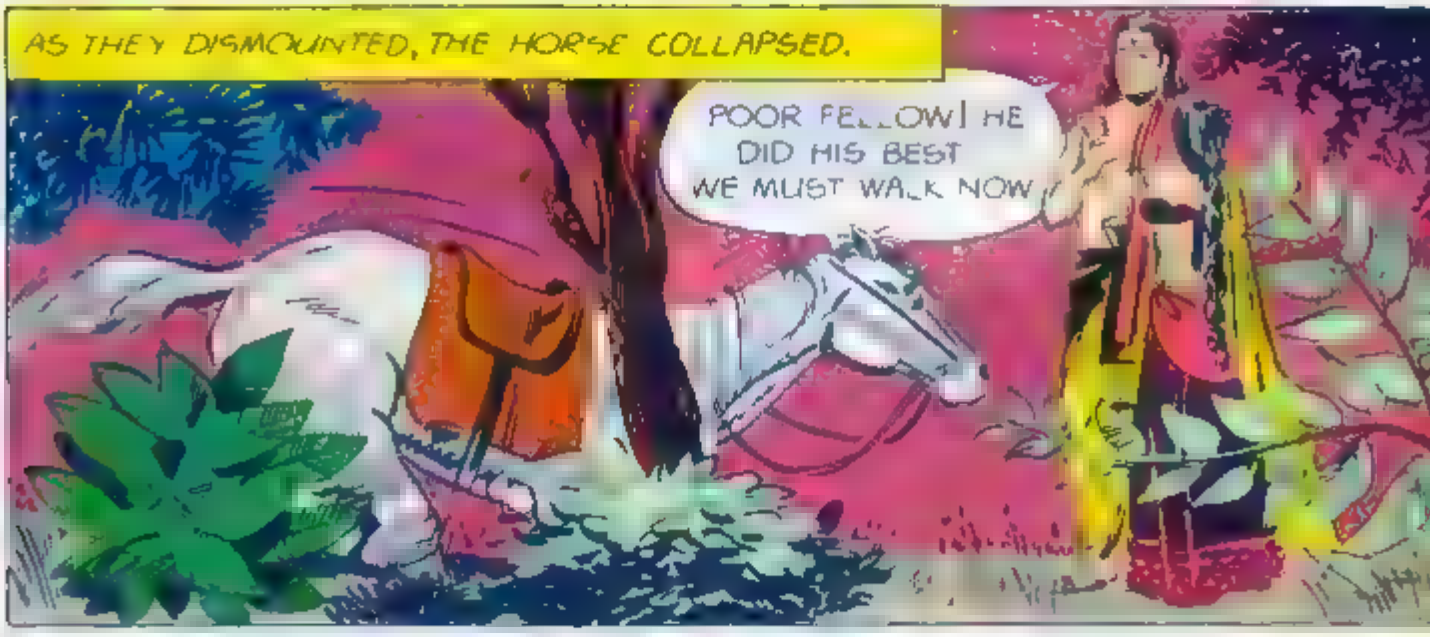
GO AFTER THEM. RESCUE HER
WHAT ABOUT YOU?

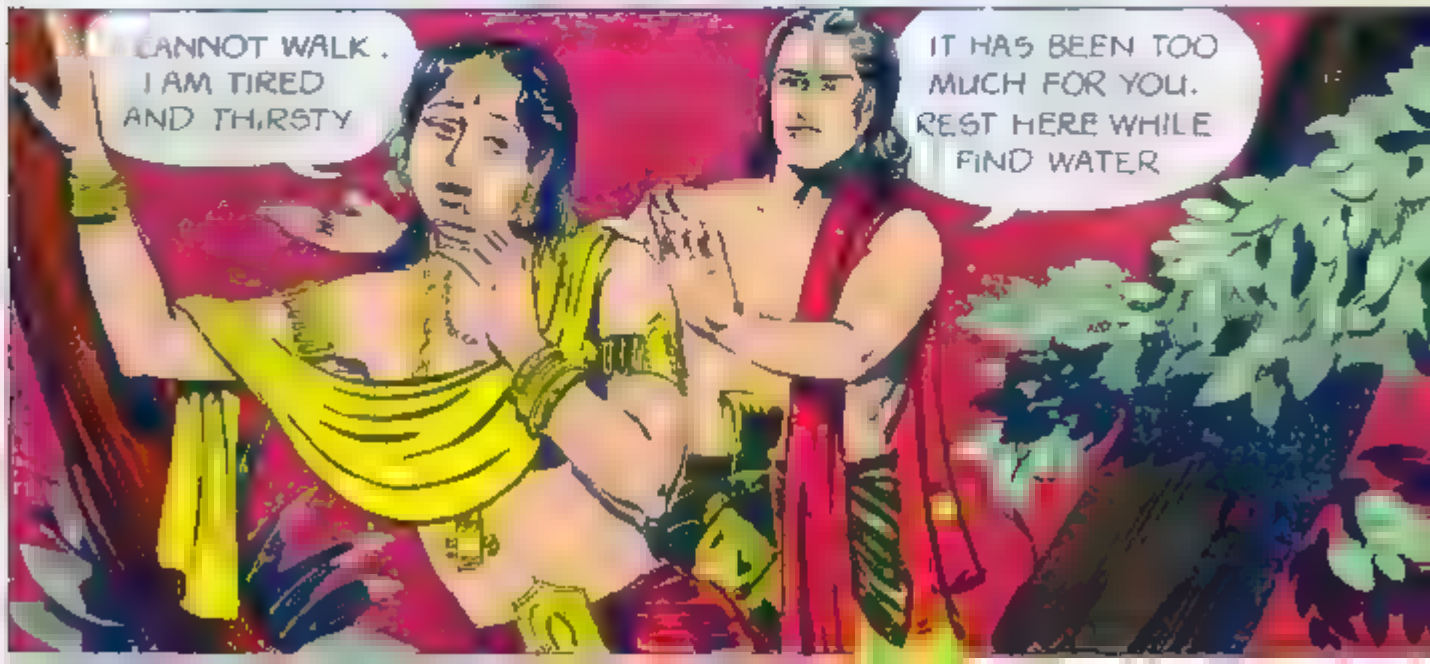
DON'T WORRY ABOUT US. GO HURRY!

SHRIDATTA SOON CAUGHT UP WITH THE HORSEMEN
AH! THERE GO THE VILLAINS.
STOP! STOP!
HE ATTACKED THEM.
MY DIVINE SWORD WILL NEVER FAIL ME
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD NEVER COME
I'LL SET YOU FREE


ON THE RETURN JOURNEY–
NOW TO HELP MY FRIENDS
THEY TRIED SO HARD TO PROTECT ME


AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME DISTANCE–
OUR HORSE IS TIRED WE MUST DISMOUNT AND LET HIM REST

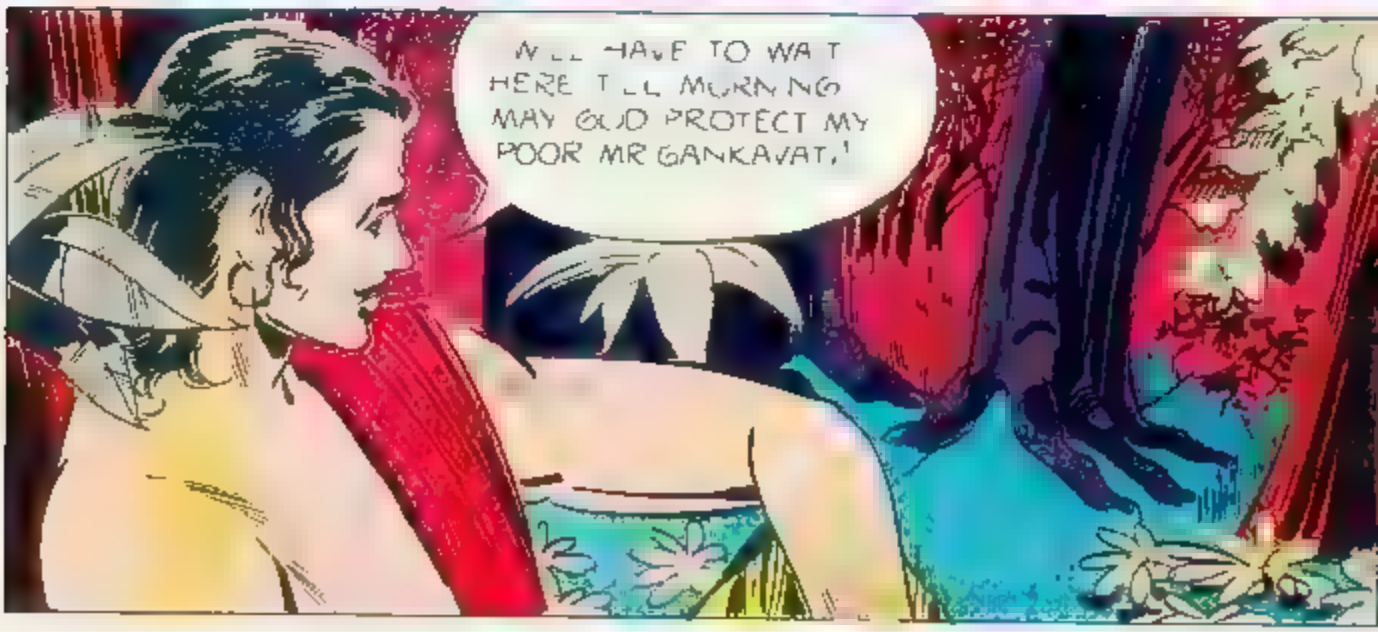

AS THEY DISMOUNTED, THE HORSE COLLAPSED.
POOR FELLOW! HE DID HIS BEST WE MUST WALK NOW


CANNOT WALK. I AM TIRED AND THIRSTY
IT HAS BEEN TOO MUCH FOR YOU. REST HERE WHILE I FIND WATER

DO NOT GO FAR. I AM FRIGHTENED
I'LL SOON BE BACK
I MUST MARK THE WAY CAREFULLY. THE FOREST IS GETTING DENSER AND MIGHT GET LOST
SHRIDATTA AT LAST FOUND WATER ON HIS WAY BACK—
DID I COME BY THIS TREE OR BY THAT? BOTH LOOK ALIKE. THE LIGHT HAS CHANGED, AND I CAN'T DISTINGUISH THEM.

IT'S GETTING DARK
I'LL CLIMB THIS
TREE. MAYBE I CAN
SEE HER FROM
UP THERE

IN THE FAILING
LIGHT I CAN'T
RECOGNIZE
ANYTHING


WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT
HERE TILL MORNING
MAY GOD PROTECT MY
POOR MR GANKAVAT.'

MEANWHILE —
WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM WHY SN'T HE BACK?
IF SOMEONE COMES WHAT SHALL I DO?
WHAT IS THAT NOISE? IS IT A ION?
KRRK!
IT WAS ONLY A HUNTER.
EEEEE!
DON'T BE AFRAID, LADY!

GOOD SIR, PLEASE TAKE ME AWAY FROM HERE!

WHO ARE YOU? WHY ARE YOU HERE ALONE?

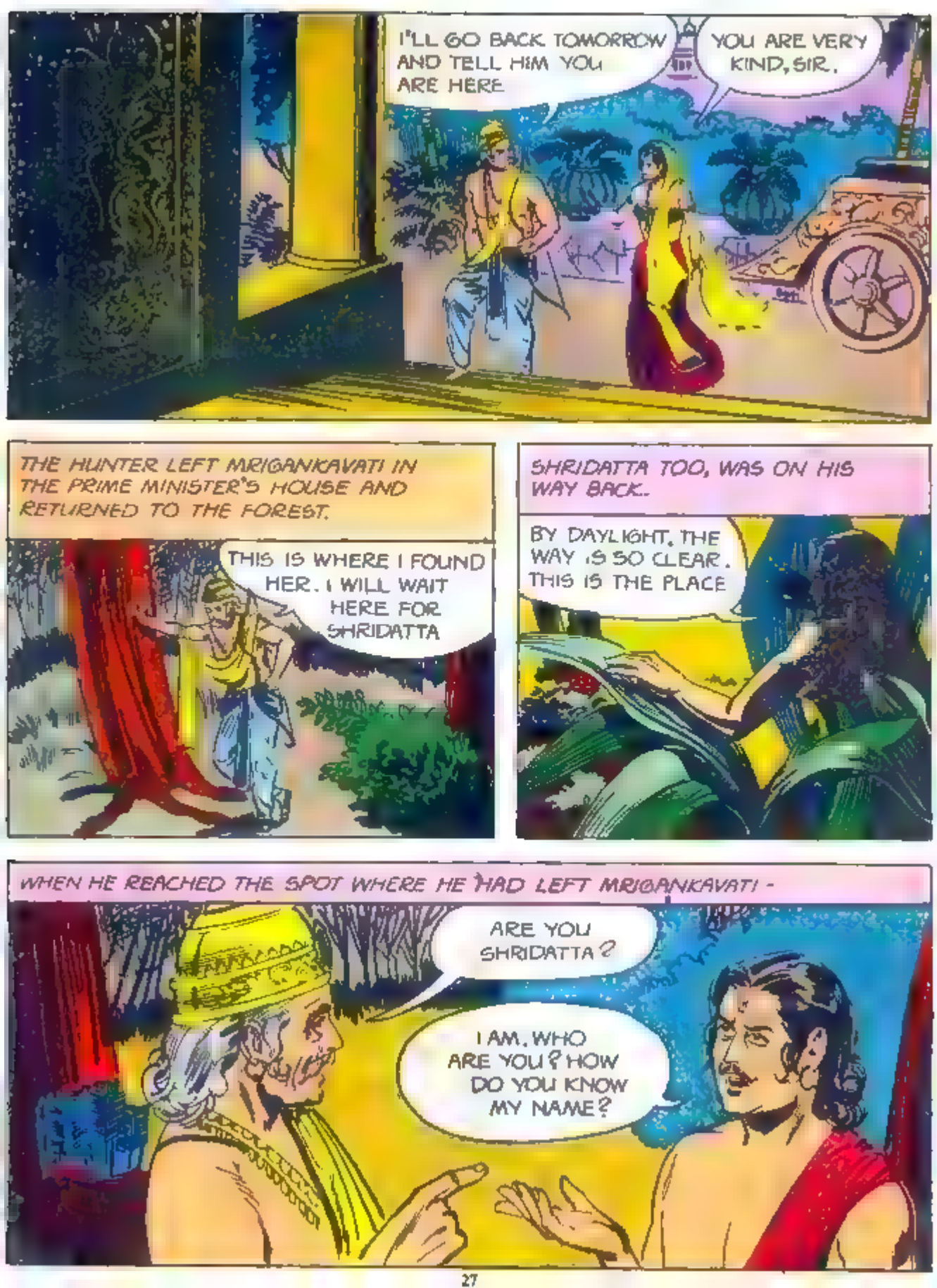
M- MY HUSBAND WENT TO FETCH WATER. HE MUST HAVE LOST HIS WAY. HE IS NOT BACK YET

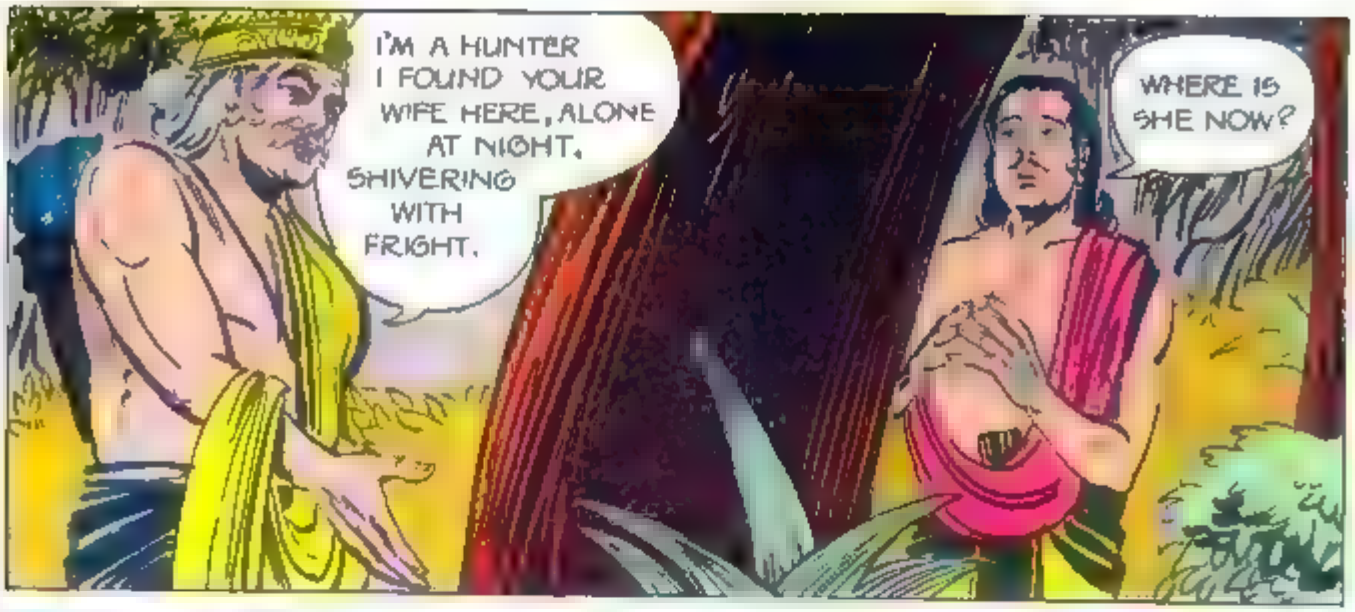
COME! I'LL TAKE YOU TO MATHURA. IT IS NOT FAR FROM HERE.

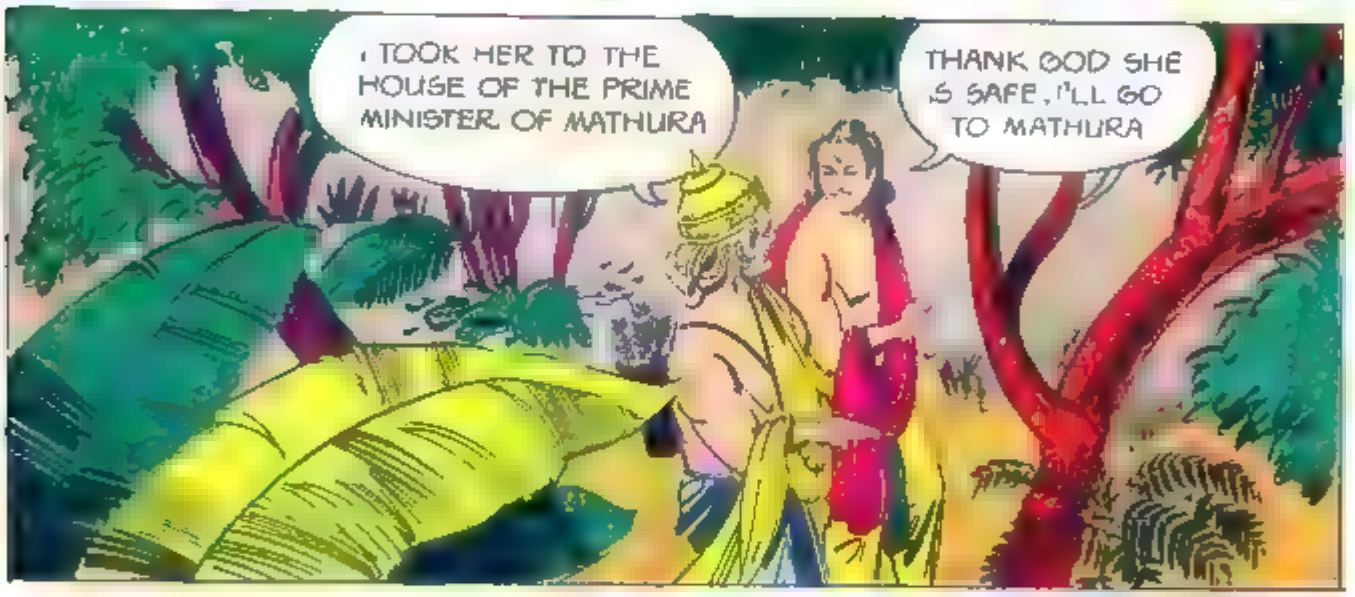
OUTSIDE THE CITY OF MATHURA

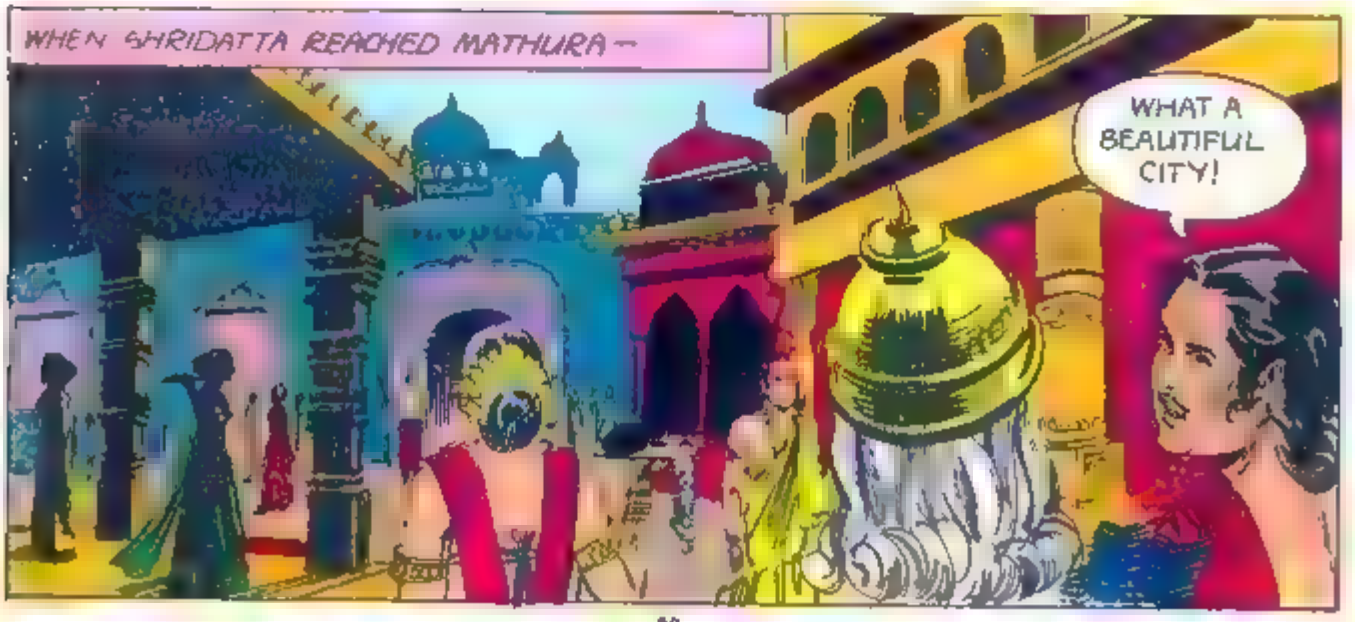
THE PRIME MINISTER IS A GOOD MAN. WE'LL GO TO HIS HOUSE. THEY WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU

BUT HOW WILL MY SHRIDATTA FIND ME? PERHAPS I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME AWAY


I'LL GO BACK TOMORROW AND TELL HIM YOU ARE HERE
YOU ARE VERY KIND, SIR.
THE HUNTER LEFT MRIGANKAVATI IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE AND RETURNED TO THE FOREST.
THIS IS WHERE I FOUND HER. I WILL WAIT HERE FOR SHRIDATTA
SHRIDATTA TOO, WAS ON HIS WAY BACK.
BY DAYLIGHT, THE WAY IS SO CLEAR. THIS IS THE PLACE
WHEN HE REACHED THE SPOT WHERE HE HAD LEFT MRIGANKAVATI -
ARE YOU SHRIDATTA?
I AM. WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?


I'M A HUNTER I FOUND YOUR WIFE HERE, ALONE AT NIGHT, SHIVERING WITH FRIGHT.
WHERE IS SHE NOW?

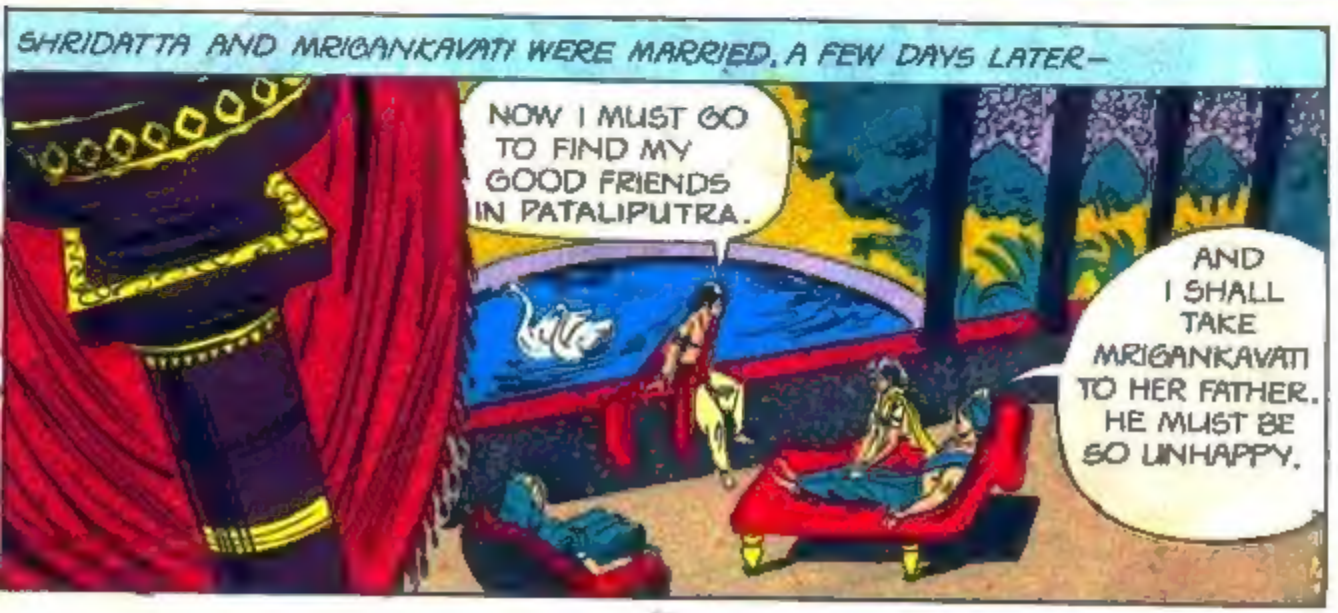

I TOOK HER TO THE HOUSE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF MATHURA
THANK GOD SHE IS SAFE. I'LL GO TO MATHURA


WHEN SHRIDATTA REACHED MATHURA—
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CITY!

SUDDENLY—
SHRIDATTA! I WAS SO FRIGHTENED. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO YOU?
AT LAST, I HAVE FOUND YOU!
WHEN THEY REACHED THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE—
COME. I MUST TELL THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS WIFE THAT YOU'VE RETURNED. THEY HAVE BEEN SO KIND TO ME.
THEY DESERVE MY UNDYING GRATITUDE AND RESPECT.
MOTHER! THIS IS MY LORD.
I AM SHRIDATTA, THE SON OF KALANEMI OF PATALIPUTRA.

KALANEMI! YOUR FATHER IS MY BROTHER. WE HAVE NOT SEEN EACH OTHER SINCE I LEFT HOME TO SEEK MY FORTUNE. HOW IS HE?
ALAS! BOTH MOTHER AND HE WERE KILLED SOME TIME AGO.

SHRIDATTA TOLD HIS UNCLE THE WHOLE STORY. WHEN HE HAD FINISHED—
GOD BROUGHT YOU HERE TO ME. YOU SHALL BE MY HEIR AND MARRY MRIGANKAVATI.
WE HAD NO CHILDREN. NOW I HAVE TWO — A SON AND A DAUGHTER.


SHRIDATTA AND MRIGANKAVATI WERE MARRIED. A FEW DAYS LATER—
NOW I MUST GO TO FIND MY GOOD FRIENDS IN PATALIPUTRA.
AND I SHALL TAKE MRIGANKAVATI TO HER FATHER. HE MUST BE SO UNHAPPY.

MRIGANKAVATI WENT WITH HER UNCLE AND AUNT TO UJJAIN.

I AM THE PRIME MINISTER OF MATHURA. MRIGANKAVATI IS MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

I AM SO RELIEVED TO SEE YOU. WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY?

FORGIVE ME, FATHER.

SHRIDATTA FOUND HIS FRIENDS AND BROUGHT THEM TO UJJAIN.

YOU MUST CHALLENGE VIKRAMASHAKTI.

WE'LL MAKE YOU THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA.

THE KING OF MATHURA WILL BE ON OUR SIDE. YOU CAN DEPEND ON THAT.

I'LL COLLECT AN ARMY AND WE WILL ATTACK PATALIPUTRA.

MRIGANKAVATI'S FATHER MADE A A BOLD DECISION.

A TERRIBLE BATTLE WAS FOUGHT OUTSIDE PATALIPUTRA, IN WHICH...

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